

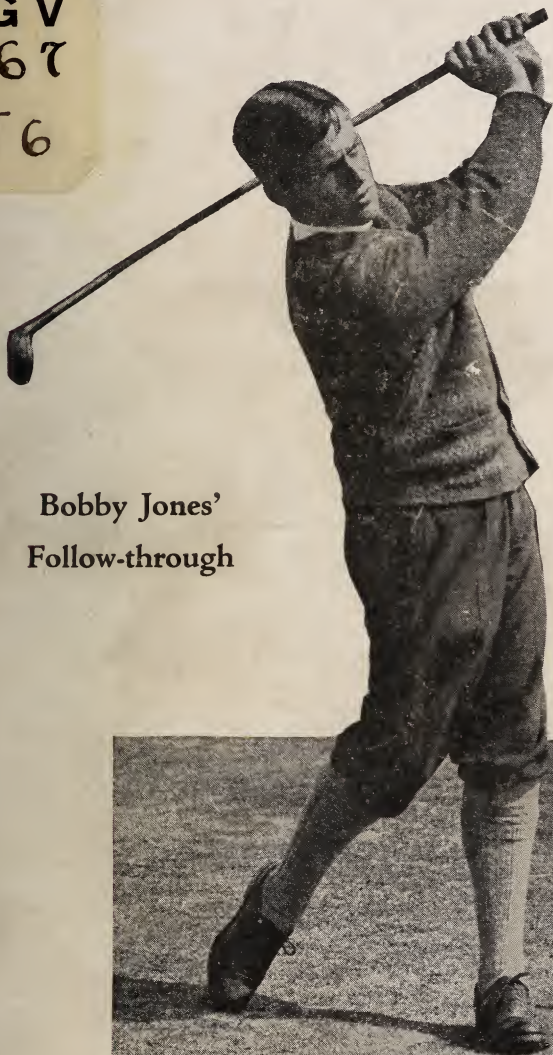
INSPIRED GOLF

BY

R. B. TOWNSHEND

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INSPIRED GOLF

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B. Townshend*
BY

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EX-TREASURER OF THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY GOLF CLUB



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INSPIRED GOLF

CHAPTER I

THE SIN OF ACEDIA

THIS little work is a humble attempt to come to the rescue of the golfing backslider. The backslider may be taken to be a player who, after having been for some time familiar with the game of golf, finds himself (or herself) slipping steadily back instead of forwards, which for a keen hand is a truly miserable state to fall into. The victim of the lapse is quite aware that something or other has gone radically wrong with his golf, and yet he is quite unable to discover what is the matter. He tries desperately hard to cure himself, only to find that he grows more and more uncertain of his stroke ; and in this unhappy condition he is apt to fall into the sin of acedia. Acedia is an old monkish term for a spiritual numbness, a sort of dull acceptance of the fatal feeling that nothing is or can be of any use. When this state of acedia proves to be chronic, as too often happens, the victim sees an awful future before him ; he sees himself as a weak and erring

brother, knowing that such he must ever be, and, worst of all, not caring.

Take heart, poor victim ! Others before you have suffered, and some at least have found out what to them has opened a way of escape. Try, at any rate, the simple remedy I offer. You can fall no lower than you are ; you may take a turn for the better. And with my very best wishes for your salvation I plunge in medias res.

I take for granted that (like myself) you are either a regular double-figure handicap man or else your backsliding has brought you so low that your allowance ought to be reckoned in double figures, and that, in short, your present plight is such as to leave you not the shadow of a chance against a scratch player unless he concedes you a dozen strokes or more. Take yourself as such then ; and now you need not be too proud to condescend to the comforting assistance of a liberal tee. A tee only a single millimetre in height may suit the ideal of the plus handicap man, the great artist in golf ; and if it pleases you to imitate him do so ; but remember that for you his ideal method may prove only a hindrance, just as of old the armour of Saul was to David. You know yourself for a weak brother ; very well, then, accept the fact, and do not be afraid to accept anything that helps your weakness. The plus man, as I said, may tee up his ball only one millimetre or the twenty-fifth part of an inch. Do you tee up yours a quarter of an inch, a half inch, a whole inch, nay two

inches even, if by any means you can but give yourself the confidence that you are not going either to top it or to schlaflf. Take a club, take any club you like, driver, brassy, cleek, iron, stand six feet back from the ball, and try a preliminary swing at a daisy: if there are no daisies a scrap of paper or a gun-wad will do as well. Address your daisy, and waggle as much as you like. Even a weak brother (or sister) has the right to waggle every bit as well and every bit as much as the plus player. While you waggle watch your breathing, watch just how you draw the air into your lungs and exhale it again. Now inhale deeply, then exhale, wagging all the time, and as you finish exhaling sole your club behind the daisy. Keep the club soled a moment while you draw in a full inspiration, shut your lips tight, and hold your breath. Now, now—instantly but slowly—take the club up—still holding the breath—up to the top of the swing, pause there for the barest fraction of a second, and then swiftly deliver your blow. Not till the club comes away after passing the daisy are you to let your breath go out fully and freely. This is the inspiration I speak of, this delivery of the blow when the lungs are filled with air and the breath is held. Here is the secret out at last. Practise it, yes, practise it assiduously, with faith and hope, and what before seemed impossible will come easy to you. You will cease to slide backwards; you will be another golfer, a new man.

There is no mystery about the thing, no faking, no doping, no magic. It is no mechanical trick of a fancy club fitted with a concealed spring, or of a new ball filled with something more elastic than rubber. The secret is in you, in yourself. Here, inside your chest, you have lungs; fill them, and strike with them filled. There you have it! You cannot believe in so simple a remedy? Try it.

Of course inspiration does not supersede all the knowledge, the painfully hard-won knowledge, of golf which you already possess. For the most part the old maxims that you have so often repeated to yourself were true before, and they remain as true as ever still.

Take only a few of them:

1. Eye on the ball.
2. Slow back.
3. Start the club up with the wrists.
4. Left wrist hollow not arched.
5. Grip with the fingers.
6. Grip tight with the left.
7. Grip tighter in the down swing.
8. Upper arms near the body.
9. Left hip well round towards the ball.
10. Left shoulder well down to the ball.
11. Backbone the axis of swing.
12. Head as still as possible.
13. Follow through with the arms.
14. Hands away.
15. Left foot at finish firm on the ground.

Well, there are fifteen of them, anyway, to be thought of at once and consecutively ; they might easily be multiplied to a full hundred, a figure enough to make the golfer recall the predicament of the unfortunate insect with her hundred legs :

The centipede was happy quite
Until the toad in fun
Said, ' Pray which leg goes after which ? '
And worked her mind to such a pitch
She lay distracted in the ditch
Considering how to run.

The golfer's grip of the stance with his feet has been described as almost quadrumanous, but his brain has to work more like clockwork even than a centipede's.

Moreover the fifteen maxims above cited are all positive commandments, all ' thou-shalts ' ; of ' thou-shalt-nots ' the list is just as long : don't press . . . don't sway . . . and so forth.

But there, never mind the number, and don't let them worry you ; have faith in inspiration, and go on swinging cheerfully at the modest daisies on your lawn. I say on your lawn, for that is the sort of quiet place where you should first practise inspiration, if the idea, as I assume, be new to your mind. For Heaven's sake do give the new idea a fair chance and don't let it run away with you ; don't go off at once to make a match with a friend and proceed to play round with the notion that this novelty of inspiration is going to do you a lot of good. The novelty will infallibly thrust all the older ideas into the

background, and though you may have been badly off your game before you may find there are lower depths still to which you can fall, which is very far from the result I am aiming at.

No, the new idea must be introduced discreetly and without disturbance to the great company of ideas already huddling together in the dimly lit chambers of your inner self. I sincerely hope that inspiration will prove a godsend to you, but the pressing need is to prevent it from becoming a curse and upsetting your poor bewildered brain worse than the centipede's. How to solve this problem will be the next point that we have to consider.

CHAPTER II

BODY AND MIND

TO make the idea of 'inspiration' fit in with the other ideas on the golfing swing already packed away in your mind is the next question. You take up a club in order to swing at a daisy with the whole of the fifteen maxims I have before quoted lying doggo in your subconscious self, each simply aching to attract your attention. As you swing, some one of them will have succeeded in pushing itself into the foreground of the mental view, while the others are half, or hardly half, perceived in the background. And right into the limelight in the foreground of this mental picture you now have to crowd yet another item, the deep inspiration I recommended. How are you to manage it?

This is a problem in experimental psychology (which is all the go nowadays) and by attacking it we raise ourselves to the dignity of philosophers. But philosophy is nothing if not scientific, so let us ensure that our psychological experiment is made scientifically. We must eliminate to begin with, so far as we can, all outside distracting influences. Therefore, I say, try your experiment

quietly in solitude by yourself. Let me repeat, of all things don't begin to experiment when you are actually engaged in a match with an opponent. You will most likely lose your match, which matters little, and you will probably ruin your experiment, which to you may matter much. For the nervousness you will feel in trying it in a match, when you know that if you fail you will infallibly proceed to nag at yourself the whole of the rest of the round for having thrown the game away, is enough by itself to spoil any stroke. As you value your future golf, then, do not experiment like that. Try the new way of striking when the fate of the ball is a matter of no importance whatever. That is the true method of science.

Choose therefore a quiet part of the links where you will not be in anybody's way : choose also one where you are not likely to lose your ball. For if you are in a state of anxiety lest you should hit somebody else, or lest your ball should fly off into the rough and hide, your mind will be distracted. As you swing, you will be thinking of what may happen to the ball, and your eye which you are trying to keep on the spot where the ball lies will be instinctively fidgeting to follow its flight. To escape this temptation I advise you to experiment with captive balls. The plus man may scoff at them, saying that with a captive ball you can't tell whether you hook or slice. He is right enough there, of course, but then we are not out just now to contend with hooking and slicing ; we are after something else. And that something else can be

very successfully observed with a captive ball in your own garden.

You can easily buy a captive ball or make one for yourself. A golf-ball hampered by a yard of double string with a pair of champagne corks at the end can hardly be induced to fly fifty yards even by the strongest driver, while you as a weak brother may quite likely find forty to be your full limit. But if you haven't got forty yards of free range in your garden all you have to do is to tie on more corks. You can stop the strongest flier in ten yards if you only put on clogs enough.

Next we come to the question of teeing up. I cannot believe that even a high tee does a weak brother any harm, whatever its effect may be on the plus man, and I am sure that if you want to save the turf of your lawn from unsightly scars you will have to use a tee. This again can be bought in the market at a price anywhere from twopence to two shillings, and of these tees of the shop there are many varieties: or you may commandeer from the gardener or buy at the ironmonger's a foot or so of common rubber garden hose, an inch or $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch in diameter, and cut it (with a wetted knife) into tees of any height you choose. I should recommend you to cut it into sizes of $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, and one inch in height. Join them in assorted pairs, with a bit of red rag tied between, to keep them from going off too far and to make them easy to find.

So now at last we are ready for action. Tee up a captive, home-made or bought, and take your

club in hand. Stand back in order that you may try a preliminary swing at a daisy, and watch your own mind as you strike. After you have struck ask yourself immediately what you remember having had in the foreground of your mental view. The inspiration was there, of course : you were out for that : you can scarcely fail to remember how you first ex-spired as you soled your club, and then in-spired deeply while keeping the club-face close to the ball, how you continued to hold the breath in during the up-swing, and breathed it out as the stroke finished. There was no difficulty about that : the novelty of the idea of inspiration enabled you to keep your attention firmly fixed.

But how about the other fifteen points, which you had in your mental background, in the keeping of the unconscious self ? What happened to them ? Tax your memory sternly, demand whether it can recall anything of any of them. Ask it first as to the beginning of the swing. Did the wrists start the club back ? Did they take it up slow ? Was the left wrist flexed so as to be hollow at the top ? During that sequence of three motions, or rather three parts of one motion, you were primarily, no doubt, busy over the question of inspiration or keeping the lungs full ; but you must bully your memory to tell you something about those other three also. How much it will tell is bound to vary indefinitely with the individual who makes the experiment. Smith's memory may be able distinctly to recall the

details of all three. Jones's may have no definite picture of any ; all it contains may be a vague idea that the left wrist was bent out stiffly when at the top, and consequently the up swing was not given time enough to finish itself out and the down swing began a little too soon, with the result that the body came through before the arms. There is a whole train of causation here. If the wrist had been well hollowed, or bent under, at the top, the left hip would have had time to get twisted round opposite the ball and the body need not have got before the arms.

Suppose yourself to be Jones, and suppose your memory to have retained thus much of the action. Swing again (waggle and ex-spire, sole and in-spire) and mind, now, you flex that wrist right at the top. You strike. Round comes the club with a whish-h-h, and you are conscious not only that you did contrive to hold your breath but also that you did flex that wrist rightly. You managed to have both images in the foreground of your mind at once, so to speak, the tightly closed mouth and the flexed, hollowed wrist ; you had to do a sort of mental squint, but both things were in the view.

Perhaps you did not manage it. In that case swing again and see if you can control your mental action better. Never mind the rest of the fifteen old maxims ; concentrate on that last one only, the hollowing or flexing of the wrist at the top, not of course forgetting inspiration. I have set you really an easy task, for by the time you get

to the top of the swing you have about done with the inspiring ; the breath is ready to be exhaled, and the effort to hold it may be allowed to relax, while the effort to give that flex to the wrist continues.

Now then, address the solid ball itself and not the meek daisy this time. Sole your club. Swing. Let her go ! Hurrah, you have managed it. You did flex the wrist without having forgotten to hold the breath. You have made an experiment in psychology, and your golf begins to be inspired.

CHAPTER III

NO TRIFLING

WELL, you have now had one shot if no more at inspired golf, and the next question for you is whether you care to go on with it. People do vary so very greatly with regard to matters of this sort ; some folks are quite able to make up their minds in half a minute as to whether a thing is going to suit them, or the contrary ; whereas others may take a month to think about it, and then they don't know. " If you hear me talk," as the Far West cowboys used to say when I was ranching out there fifty years ago, you will scarcely content yourself with giving inspiration so mean a test as only a bare half minute ; you will try it, at the least, let us say, for half an hour. And be sure that you make that half hour's trial a fair one. Whether you choose to strike at a free ball on the links or at a captive in the garden give your mind wholly to the act of striking, and do it with ' intention ' in the full philosophic sense of the word. Don't go worrying yourself about what may happen to the ball ; leave that to take care of itself ; concentrate absolutely on what you do in the striking.

There lies the essence of all practice that is to be of any real worth to you, concentration. Knocking a golf ball casually about may be good enough as a form of exercise in order to open your pores and limber up your muscles, but it won't help your golf much. To improve, you must bend your whole mind to the shot. Twenty shots struck with intention are of more value than two hundred which are only half meant. Give yourself time to think between them ; twenty in half an hour will be quite enough. And use self-examination. Analyse after each stroke ; think where it differed from the previous stroke ; think of what you would wish to alter in the next. Don't beat your breast or use Western cowboy swears, if you top or fizzle. Say to yourself plainly, " that happened because I broke some law," and then see if you can spot which law it was, and when and how you broke it. Tee up again, and try not to break the same law in the same way next time. Above all don't worry. Smile at your failures. Smile.

Remember that your practice should not go on too long. Such powers of attention as your mind may have are invaluable, but they are also easily overstrained. Look backwards and reflect on the days of your youth, when you were a boy at school ; how long a single hour in form then seemed, how weary and inattentive your mind used to grow before the end. Yet then you only had Latin and Greek to wrestle with, or perhaps Euclid. Now you are up against golf, a

very different proposition from trifling with *Propria quae maribus* or the *Pons Asinorum*. As I once heard a wise old clerical golfer exclaim with fervent emphasis, "Remember you can't trifle with golf!"

He was absolutely right, and therefore you cannot afford to trifle with this inspiration idea. No, give the cure I have ventured to suggest to you a fair show; don't give it only the dregs of your mind; let each inspired shot have the full benefit of every atom of will-power you can dispose of. If you do this faithfully you soon will be able to judge whether the cure is likely to suit your case or not.

Suppose it does not, then *cadit quaestio*. There is nothing more to say, and you may shut up these pages; it will be better for you to go on as you are. But if the inspiration tip shows signs of being a help, then don't hurry the cure. Don't start out to make trial of it by going out at once to play in a match and insisting on sedulously inspiring before each shot. Of course you might do so and find it a help right from the start, but you might also find it tend to make you too self-conscious and so put you off. Go on and play your match by all means, golf is a game and what you are after is amusement, but don't insist to yourself while playing that you are going to inspire. If when you strike off you find that your breath is inclined to hold itself, as it were automatically, why let it do so, but don't worry over it. Don't go asking yourself every time did you or did you not inspire before that shot. On the contrary, try to play your game in your

ordinary style as far as you conveniently can, letting all this new inspiration business slide.

But the next day—or better still the same day, after you have finished your game and have had tea and rested—then take out a club and ball and give your inspired golf a few minutes trial, just enough to be interesting but not to make you feel stale. Do this daily for a week, and then go out and play a match in which at every tee, and if you like, before every shot through the green, and before every putt, you practise this new scheme of inspiration. A week will have given you time to adjust yourself to the new dodge mentally and bodily, and you now are not likely to find that it makes you produce anything worse than the weak brother's usual performance with which you are only too painfully familiar. Even if you do fall below your own humble par, you may ask yourself whether this is not simply due to nervousness caused by the novelty, and try whether after playing a few more matches this first nervousness will not disappear. If you still find yourself losing games steadily when you know that you ought not, then you will at last have a fair right to say, "Inspiration for me is a fraud."

Here let me make you a present of one suggestion. It is just possible that there was no need for you to inspire, because you had already been practising it unconsciously, just as Moliere's *bourgeois gentilhomme* had talked prose all his life without knowing it. There is such a thing as a habit changing itself automatically—and this

may have been the case with you. Think over the past. Was there ever a time when you noticed a sudden improvement in your game? Possibly at that very time you did, quite spontaneously, adopt my remedy. James Braid has told us that from being only a moderate driver (moderate in his class, that is) he suddenly became a long one without knowing why. Can it have been due to an unconscious alteration in his way of breathing? If so he must be the very Monsieur Jourdain of golf.

Well, we may leave that matter to settle itself; each of us must analyse his own inner consciousness in his own way. But let us suppose that after a week's private practice you try inspiration in a match and find that you seem to be the better for it rather than the worse. Then go ahead, but continue practising your new method in private as well as in matches.

And do not forget that if Monsieur Jourdain's prose was unconsciously acquired the rest of the desired accomplishments were attained by purposeful application. The *bon bourgeois* did not trifle over the education of a *gentilhomme*, but carefully concentrated himself on what might seem the most trivial of details. You should imitate him on this point no less carefully, and whether you are thinking of inspiration, or wrist work, or follow through, or any other maxim, at the very instant of the act you must focus your whole mind on it, and, as the writer of Proverbs has it, 'Do it with thy might.' There is to be no trifling with golf.

CHAPTER IV

PLAYING PENITENTE

WE may suppose now that the idea of inspired golf has become tolerably familiar to your mind, and that you no longer need to keep the limelight on it so strongly while you address the ball. The next step in our course of experimental psychology is to see just how large a variety of the older ideas stowed away in our subconscious self we can combine with the act of inspiration at the moment of striking. Variety, that's what we need to keep us from being bored ; and did not Voltaire, the great philosopher, say of education, " Every method is good except the one that bores you." The same thought occurred to Lin McClean, the cowboy hero of Owen Wister's cleverest story, when he suddenly determined to quit cow-punching, and remarked to the startled ranch foreman who wanted to know why, " What's the matter with some variety ? "

Here, then, is the particular variety that I would next offer you. Tee up, as before, and I don't care a jot whether you tee a free ball on the links or a captive in the garden ; and begin operations once again with the usual preliminary swing.

You have already got the habit of inspiration at the beginning of the stroke as well as of using the wrists properly, even at the risk of giving yourself a mental squint by the attempt to keep both points steadily in view at the same time. Now I propose to introduce a third object into the foreground of your mental view, namely the posture at the finish. Consider the many fine finishes you have seen when watching golfers strike off, and the many pictures you have admired in books and newspapers which have been taken of them in the act. What is it that has struck you most ? I suppose the way in which the arms and hands have come out away from the body in front and very often have swung clean round to the left till the club has finished right down behind the back. Not all the fine players bring the club so far round, but all, I think without exception, get the hands away so that the club comes right through. Tell yourself that you will do the same as you address your daisy for the preliminary swing. As before, you can put down a gun-wad or a scrap of paper if you happen to be short of daisies.

Swing, then, remembering both to inspire and to flex the wrist, and also to insist on the club coming through. Perhaps you find that the club seems to wish to pull itself up short before the finish is completed. If so, don't let it do so ; shove it on ; keep it moving, aye, till it fairly hits you in the small of the back. Hitting yourself in the small of the back may be an exaggeration of the ideal follow-through, but then it pays to

exaggerate sometimes. My name for this exaggerated finish down the back is playing the Penitente.

Let me tell you why. On a certain day in Lent, now alas ! over forty years ago, I rode into a very remote village of what was then the very remote Territory of New Mexico. I saw the people (many of whom I knew) standing about in groups apparently occupied in watching some performance, and then in their midst I caught sight of a mysterious white object, moving about very queerly and acting in a way that I could not make out or understand. I rode closer, and what I beheld was this. A human being, stripped naked save for a pair of loose white drawers, and also for a loose white cotton muffler that entirely swathed its head, was dragging itself about with long half-kneeling steps in a bent posture. Its two hands grasped a soap-weed scourge, and the scourge was red, and the bare back was red, and there were red stains on the white cotton drawers down below. At each dragging step the creature raised the hands that held the bloody scourge and brought it sharply over the shoulder so that it came with a whish-h-h down the back. This ghastly self-torturer was one of a band of Penitentes or flagellants, who publicly flogged themselves every year in Lent, and I was destined to learn a good deal more about the horrid business and the people who took part in it ; but that is a long story which I have partially told elsewhere.

However, I have never forgotten the first sight of that awful Penitente slashing himself down the

back ; and every time on the links that I indulge in a preliminary swing with an exaggerated follow-through his figure rises before my memory. And if I want to remind myself of the importance of bringing the club right through and well down the back I look back upon that strange scene under the torrid New Mexican sun and bid myself, " Play Penitente."

Those poor benighted self-torturers slashed their backs as a penitential atonement for their sins. Come on, then, weak brother, and do your share of penance to atone for your golfing sins of the past. It is up to you now, as we used to say out west, to be a Penitente. Fix your eye on that meek daisy, inspire, swing, strike, and make that club whistle through till it hits you where the Penitente hit himself. Now address the teed ball, fill your lungs again, hit it for all you're worth, and fetch that club through. Did you fail to get it through with the ball, where you had succeeded with the daisy ? That very likely was because the shock of the collision with the ball checked the club. Never mind. Tee up another, take a full breath once more, and strike off again. You may not succeed the second or even the third time, but persevere, and you will do so eventually and will get off a shot in which, after smiting not the empty air but the solid ball, you find that you have succeeded in bringing the club quite through until it finished down across your back.

Now at once apply the self-examination process,

Did you keep in mind the inspiration and the right use of the wrists in the up-swing as well as the third idea of following-through at the finish? Probably you were all right with the inspiration, for that came at the very beginning, but possibly you slurred the wrist action. Anyhow you had better swing again and again till you manage to keep all three points in your mind together and slur none. If you like to avail yourself of a small material aid to this, write on a piece of paper in large letters

INSPIRE
USE WRISTS
FOLLOW THROUGH

and stick it up on an impromptu stand right opposite your tee, just where on many links they stick up a notice "REPLACE THE DIVOT." Look at it before you begin the swing and fix your attention firmly on it. You will find the effort to keep this triple bill in mind rather fatiguing, but go on doing it steadily for several shots. Take a rest, lest you grow stale, and do something else for a few minutes. Then begin again, and repeat the process, always laying the chief emphasis on the third of the trio, the last item in your mental programme. Concentrate entirely upon that, upon the determined follow-through. Let the club hit you hard on the back every time. You know you deserve it for your past sins. At all costs make yourself play the Penitente.

CHAPTER V

VIM, VINEGAR AND VITRIOL

SUPPOSE we proceed to try yet another little variety. By this time we may assume that a deep inspiration before each shot is taken for granted. The action should already have become part of the unconscious self so far as to be a sort of automatic process that we go through every time we address the ball. And perhaps the unconscious self will also be kind enough to take charge of the two other points to both of which we have been attending or trying to attend at one and the same time, namely, the use of the wrists in the up-swing and the prolonged follow-through at the finish ; we have been keeping the limelight on these two ; now we will put them back into the middle distance of the mental view and bring up another pair of fresh points into the foreground. As in the former case it will be convenient if the two fresh points come, not just exactly together in the stroke, but one later than the other. The first point I will take is the twist of the body : this goes on right through the up-swing while the wrists (and arms) are taking the club up. Of course you will carefully remind yourself to inspire

as you address the ball, but be careful also not to think too much about it : concentrate your mind resolutely, and focus it on the body twist ; neither should you think too much about the wrist-work ; let your wrists, as it were, take the club up of themselves (slowly) while the active part of your brain is busy seeing to it that your left hip turns clear through a right-angle till it comes opposite the ball. The temptation to be content with a twist of something less than a right-angle is most besetting ; it needs persistent effort to keep the body steadily turning on the axis of its backbone until the left hip and shoulder actually get round to the ball. This is partly because such an almost acrobatic twisting of the bodily frame is a movement quite unusual, not to say unnatural, and partly because when you mean to strike, your will is wound up hard for action and gets impatient to be done with the necessary slowness of the body-twist ; what the wound-up will craves for is to loose off instanter in the swift strong blow. Keep a tight rein on the will, then ; check the impulse to a premature delivery of the blow, ever the most fatal of errors ; go on twisting the hip till you know it has come round opposite the ball ; incidentally this will give time for the wrists to carry the club well up and to flex themselves, with the left bent in under properly, at the top of the swing ; never mind even if there should be a very perceptible moment's pause at the top. True the plus men seem to swing like lightning, with no pause anywhere ; but then, my

friend, you and I are not plus men, very far from it ; their counsels of perfection are not for us ; we may permit ourselves to pause a moment at the top of the swing, or do anything else that may save us from hurrying into the error of plunging into the down-swing prematurely.

Look at your daisy, then, and swing at it, keeping the body-twist in the limelight of the mental view, pause momentarily at the top, and then smite that daisy, as I once heard a Far West cowboy say, with vim, vinegar and vitriol. Slaughter the daisy thus a few times till you feel sure of yourself, and then have a go at the teed ball. After twisting the body so much round you will probably find yourself less likely than usual to hit the ball with the exact middle of the club-face, but if and when you do succeed in doing so, the ball will surely fly further than it ever was wont to do for you in the past.

Here, then, is the first of the two fresh points we are trying to keep an eye on, the right-angled twist of the body. The second of them shall be a point coming later in the swing, namely the position of the feet and especially of the left foot at the finish. In your last few shots the odds are that if you have happened to notice your position at the finish you will have observed that your feet have moved away from the original stance. This may be an old trouble with you, and you may have long known how you are given to swing yourself off your stance ; but you are certainly more likely to find that you have done it when you got in

all that extra body work in those last shots. Now go over your recollections again of how a fine golfer shapes at the finish, recalling the details of his attitude either from what you have yourself observed or from pictures. When we looked at his finish before, the point to which we directed our attention was the way he got his hands away ; turn your eyes now not to his hands but to his feet. Is not his left foot set firmly on the ground, with the heel well down and the weight inclining to lean on the outside of the foot ? Indeed so strongly is this particular point marked in some of the best photographs that they almost recall the idea of a skater doing the outside edge and striking out on the left foot. No doubt you may occasionally see a fine driver swing with such abandon that the exuberance of his finish carries him right off his feet, but even he only exceeds in this manner at a certain risk, and you may be very sure that his left foot is never raised before the ball has left the face of the club, whatever he does with it after.

For an experiment, go to the opposite extreme, and see if you can compel yourself to do a shot with the maximum of immobility. Address your daisy, and say to yourself, " Flatfooted ! Heels and toes both down ! " and take a full swing so. You will find it very hard or even impossible either to get the right-angled body-twist without raising the left heel, or to follow well through and get the club away till it comes round down the back without having raised the right ; but never mind that ;

this is only an experiment, and you had better neglect all other matters for the present so long as you keep both feet firm and flat on the ground the whole time. After a few preliminary trials at the daisy, just to assure yourself that it really is possible to strike without raising either foot at all, tee up a ball and strike it in the same manner. If you have happened to strike it fair you will be quite surprised to see how well it travels in spite of the rather cramped swing, and you will perhaps note that your shoulders at the finish came into a tolerably correct attitude. This will help you to realize that it is unnecessary to swing yourself off your feet, and that a full free swing that leaves you with the left foot firmly planted at the finish is likely to give the best possible results. So after a few of these flat-footed swings, you may allow first one and then both heels to rise in turn and see if you can contrive to let yourself go in a freer swing while firmly determined on keeping your stance. If you have been in the habit of falling off it this will not be an easy task ; but you have got to do it, and remember that the more vigour you put into the shot the harder you will find it to remain firm on your feet at the finish. Play a short mashie approach, and it is easy enough to keep the feet firm, but it is quite another thing when you put every ounce of force you have into a full drive. For if you are really to make it go, weak, half-hearted hitting is no good, and the half-hearted blow itself is surely a symptom of acedia creeping on. Don't surrender to it, then. To

get distance you must put in the last ounce and you have got to hit that ball as the Western cowboy put it, with vim, vinegar and vitriol.

CHAPTER VI

INTENSIFICATION

THERE is one extra-special petition beyond all others that every golfer must have often felt inclined to offer up :

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us !

Robert Burns may not have been a golfer, but he saw deep into the soul of man, and he knew—none better—how hard it is to get outside ourselves. This indeed has been the most real of the difficulties we have had to contend with, even though inspiration, the first point that we considered, hardly requires an external view. Your own internal sensations can tell you all about drawing the air into your lungs and holding it there, and you know just what you are doing without the aid of the eye. But when it comes to such a matter as the body being twisted through a right-angle or the wrists being properly bent at the top of the swing an outside view would be a real convenience.

The best way undoubtedly to get such a view would be to have a cinematograph film taken showing you in the act of swinging ; you could

then study the moving picture of yourself over and over, and spot your faults at your leisure ; this might, however, cost rather more money than you care to spend. Let us see if we can find a less expensive substitute.

The simplest method of all is to call in the aid of the sun, not by the roundabout plan of getting yourself photographed on a film, but directly. On a sunshiny day, then, take your stand with your back to the sun, club in hand, and watch the tell-tale shadow of yourself. It will tell you if you rocked sideways on your stance, if you got your hands away, if you came well on to the left leg at the finish. One thing especially you can note accurately by this means, how much your head moves during the shot. Put a mark where the middle of your shadow's head comes, at the moment when you are addressing the ball ; swing, and see where the shadow of the head has got to afterwards. I have tried this experiment with one of the finest golfers alive, one whose style experts have frequently singled out for praise, and I find that when he has the sun right at his back the shadow of his head at the finish is a good six inches more to the left than it was when he was addressing the ball. The shadow of the head does not move away from the mark during the up-swing, nor during the down-swing before the ball is hit, but afterwards it does move those few inches to the left, as also does the shadow of the body as well. I take this to be evidence that the fine golfer in question finishes with the weight of his body trans-

ferred to a considerable extent to the left foot, and this accords exactly with the impression left by the numerous pictures illustrating the way in which an ideal finish shows the left foot firmly planted and supporting the body. In ascertaining how far your own swing fulfils these desirable conditions you can have no better ally than the sun.

Take in the next place another most essential point, that of the firmness of the grip, and ask yourself, "Do you intensify in the down-swing?"

Neither your own eye nor some friendly instructor's eye can tell you anything whatever about that; it is purely a matter of internal self-observation. Swing at a daisy, and note the grip of either hand. What is your rule with regard to it? According to the best advice you should take firm hold with your left hand in order to start the club up with the wrist, and you are to keep that hold till the club gets to the top. The right hand must grip loosely in order to allow the club to turn as it goes up. To clench the club tightly with both hands inevitably produces a stiff cramped swing that would not do at all. But if you go on to perform the down-swing with this same loose grip the blow is likely to be both feeble and inaccurate. As the club descends the grip of both hands should tighten so that at the moment of impact the club is held as firmly as possible. The force of the blow delivered by the whole of your bodily frame has to be transferred to the club by the hands and then by the club to the ball. Supposing, then, that the hands holding the club are slack they cannot but

fail efficiently to transmit the force of the body to the ball, and the resulting blow will be feeble.

If on consideration you come to the conclusion that your grip is weak you may try to strengthen it if you like by various gymnastic exercises, such as by squeezing balls, using dumbbells, and so forth, or even by simply clenching your hands tightly at intervals during the day whenever your memory reminds you to do so. This sort of thing is ineffably tedious, but there is no doubt you can thus strengthen your grip very considerably if you will be at the pains.

Do not forget, moreover, to look at the grips of your clubs occasionally; the place where the fingers come is apt to get polished and wants to be roughened again with a few touches of the file. Some men use pitch to help them to keep tight hold of the club, and presumably they find it to their advantage. If you try this do it cautiously, for if you are thin-skinned a grip with too much pitch on it—too much for you, that is—would be quite liable to skin your hands. In all such matters, of course, common sense is above all necessary. There is no need to play the fool and say, "Happy thought! try pitch," and go out to play in a competition after putting a lot of adhesive stick-stuff on your clubs for the first time in your golfing life. The right place for a man who acted like that would be the golf-course attached to an idiot asylum.

I believe some men have experimented with oval and polygonal grips, but the innovation can hardly

be said to have become popular. Possibly it may suit a few people. All one can say about it is to repeat the old jest, "For those who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they would like." Similarly rubber grips seem to suit some golfers better than leather. And similarly one can only say, "Chacun son goût."

To return to this question of intensifying: the little dodges and appliances above mentioned may or may not be of some use; they can hardly make much difference; the all important thing is your own will-power. Fix your mind on taking the club up with a firm (but not a desperate) grip; then, as it descends in the down-swing, tighten your fingers on it for all you are worth. Nothing, inspiration only excepted, will do your blow so much good as this intensification of the grip at the psychological moment. It must take place in what is only a fraction of a second, and it must take place in the proper fraction of the second. Do it before the down-swing begins, and you cramp yourself; do it after the club has hit the ball, and it is a mere futility. There is only one proper fraction of a second in the case, and that comes during the first half of the down-swing. See if you can stab your will broad awake to put "vim, vinegar and vitriol" into that proper fraction. I have no objection to offer to the gymnastics, or the hand-grip exercises, or to taking up carpentering as a finger exercise, and all the rest of it; but these things are mere aids: what is vital at the critical quarter-second is the power of the will. Intensify.

CHAPTER VII

AMARYLLIS IN THE GARDEN

I CANNOT claim to be the first to apply the word inspiration to golf, for putting by itself is an inspiration, as some one before me has well remarked ; and I fancy some of us know the happy feeling of being truly inspired on those glorious days when all our putts seem to go right of themselves. Alas ! those occasions are painfully rare compared to the less happy but too oft-recurring days when our putts either mostly go wrong or, if right, seem to get there by a pure fluke. Now, the question is, does inspiration of the special brand I advocate help towards this truly inspired putting or the reverse ?

Personally I cannot declare positively that it does help ; but this much I will say : my inspiration, by which I mean striking the ball with the lungs filled and the breath held, does undoubtedly tend to keep the head still, and in putting the importance of keeping the head still is the one point on which all the golfing authorities that I have ever heard of are agreed. Except on that single point the teachers of golf disagree more or less in their doctrines about putting, and where great doctors

disagree I most assuredly am not going to be so presumptuous as to trot out any private prescription of my own. Or, if I did, it would have to be a mere vague aphorism, a generalisation such as certain quacks love to ladle out, something couched in this sort of style: "There is no bad putting, there is only wrong thinking, wrong belief."

This does sound like quackery, but all the same the dictum really has a core of value hidden in it, just as some appalling quacks have unquestionably got hold of very real truths. Only believe in your heart that you can putt; only force yourself to have faith; your long putts will veritably go as dead as Colonel Bogey's, your short putts will go in. Quackery or not, that this is true I from my heart believe; nevertheless it does not quite solve the problem, because even as you look steadily at the ball and draw back the putter to strike, how are you to tell whether you do actually believe or whether your forced faith is no more than a make-believe? For there are two sides to your brain, and while one says, "I believe," the other may sneer aside, "Self-deceiver, you don't!"

So there you are. Faith is the solution, but who can show us the recipe for getting faith? Every one of us knows that if only he has confidence he can putt with anything at all in the shape of a putter, be it of iron, aluminium, or wood, be it made with an upright lie or a flat lie, with a long shaft or with a short one; ay, he can putt with a walking-stick or an umbrella handle if it comes

to that ; nothing matters if only you can and do believe that you can. *Potes quia posse videris.*

But though I dare offer you no recipe for getting faith, O weak brother, I may say a word or two as to practice. One way of salvation for players such as you and I are is to practise hard at our putting, and the plan I recommend to you is to keep a private spook, a Bogey Colonel of your own, and play against him, provided that, as with all other practising, you don't go on at it too long and get stale. Remember that great aphorism of Voltaire's about education : " Every method is good except the one that bores you." Don't let your putting practice be a bore, then. Make a course in your garden and see in what score you can do the round of six or nine or twelve holes, taking two strokes a hole as your bogey.

Merely striking a lot of balls at a hole, hit or miss, is no use. You must play a whole round to score, and play against a recognised ideal. Then, when you have begun by holing, say, three holes in or under bogey, it becomes a real effort to keep it up and go on to hole the remaining three, or six, or nine, or whatever number of holes you may have agreed on with yourself as the complete round, without letting The Terrible Colonel beat you. Such practice is far more useful than knocking balls casually into holes, it is also more amusing, and of course it is best of all when you can get a friendly opponent to oblige by taking you on.

Supposing that you find a partner for your garden golf you may make the game infinitely more varied

and interesting by the following scheme. Let us say that you have laid out a course of nine holes on a lawn the size of a tennis ground. Give each of the nine holes its own name, Kop, Pishah, Centre, and so on ; you must then write each name on a small square of cardboard, and put the lot of them in your pocket. Stand at one end of the lawn and at haphazard draw a name from your pocket. You and your partner then have to tee up where you are standing and play to the hole you have drawn. As soon as you have holed out there, draw another name, tee up beside the hole just played, and play to the one you have now drawn. When the holes have all been drawn and played you will have done a nine-hole round which had this excitement about it, that when you started it you had and could have no knowledge as to the order in which the holes were going to come or as to their length. Rounds thus played would practically never come two alike, and consequently you must be studying fresh putts every time, seeing that the length of each hole will depend upon how far it lies from the one drawn immediately before. If instead of doing this you always play the same nine-hole course you get too cunning, experience teaching you the strength of every putt over well ; but this simple device of drawing the holes by lot instead of playing them in a fixed order affords an infinite variety, and makes it much more like actual play on the links.

As physical strength counts for just nothing on the putting green a lady partner (if you are lucky enough to find one) may give you just as good a

match as a man. But if you find that when playing with a lady you are conscious of a natural repugnance to beating her (or being beaten by her !) try taking her in as a partner and making Colonel Bogey play your best ball. If that arrangement makes the battle too easy for the pair of you combined, you may even concede him a point, possibly even two points, in order to produce a desperate fight, but the Terrible Colonel is apt to be a stiff enough proposition anyhow. Take him on, then, and back up your partner bravely in her struggle. Never mind if the Colonel does beat you ; after all there is no harm done. Even if you have not sported with Amaryllis in the shade, you have played golf with her in the garden, and like a certain noble Roman you may write on your tablets, "*Diem hunc non perdidi.*" "I have not lost to-day." And did not you enjoy yourself the better for her company ? I used once to know out in the Far West a certain truly sporting tribe of Red Indians (not yet, I hope, quite extinct), who had a fine saying, "No happiness without a woman !" But I fear there are golfers who would hardly subscribe to that sentiment on the links.

CHAPTER VIII

AMBIDEXTERITY

AND now let us leave our putting with Amaryl-
lis in the garden for a while and switch off the
train of our ideas to quite another line. I have said
that the real difficulty you want to overcome in
golf is mental, seeing that what is required of you
is the concentrated effort of mind needful alike in
order to recognise your faults and to amend them ;
also we saw that for this purpose an outside view
of your swing can be of great help, and that the
weak brother would be well advised to get the
sun at his back so that he may be enabled to detect
his faults as they are faithfully repeated by his
shadow. This shadow image of yourself certainly
lends an effectual aid to visualising the various
positions successively occupied by the head, body,
hands, and feet, in the process of delivering the
blow, but at the same time it can hardly help you
much towards the mental analysis of the myste-
rious reasons why your arms and legs should insist
on getting themselves into the various false posi-
tions they incline to fall into. There is a method,
however, which some of us have found helpful
towards this analysis, namely, to reverse every one

of the bodily positions by striking the ball left-handed. The inversion enables the observing mind to follow the details of the action much closer.

To make trial of what is in fact a very simple experiment borrow a club from an amiable left-handed friend and tee up, that is if you can harden your heart and persuade yourself to take a full left-handed shot at a solid ball, or you may simply try a swing or two at a daisy with the back of one of your own right-handed clubs. Don't worry over it, but slash away cheerfully, remembering that if the result of the experiment pleases you it will be a simple thing to buy a few old left-handed clubs cheap either from a professional or through the exchange columns of a newspaper, and so go into the thing properly equipped on your own.

Assuming that a confiding friend has lent you one of his clubs, tee up with care and address your ball left-handed. Here, by the way, let me insert a caution. If you are using captive balls be sure the string that restrains their flight lies pointing well forward as you address the ball. If it does not, the clubhead is liable to entangle itself in the string and then the ball becomes like a certain Hebrew prophet according to Voltaire, *capable de tout*. It may come right round and hit you very hard on the head, or fly off behind you and break somebody's else's head, or it may only break a window, but it is pretty sure to do some mischief or other. You have to look out for this when you are striking in the ordinary way, but it is particularly likely to happen when you start on so awk-

ward a thing as striking off left-handed. Also I would say, and this is most important if the club is a borrowed one, don't tee the captive ball so that the club can possibly strike against the nail or staple to which the string is fastened. If you do you will find that a strongly marked impression has been made on the face of that club, and the owner won't love you much for that !

So tee up, as I said, "with care," which is the way the caddies at "Westward Ho !" were of old taught to do, and keep your weather eye open to see how you are going to shape as a left-hander. If you happen to be naturally ambidexterous, even the first blow will quite possibly be all right, only unfortunately nature's plan is to make very few of us after that highly-desirable double-action run-both-ways pattern. The famous founder of the Boy Scouts is said to have such perfect ambidexterity that he can write two letters to two different people at once, one with his right hand and one with his left ; but then he belongs to the class of the "rara avis" described by the old Roman writer as "most like to a black swan."

No ; more probably your first attempt at a full drive left-handed will end (like the marriage service) in amazement ; you will hear the club whistle through the empty air and behold the ball, still teed up in situ, looking you meekly in the face. At this sight old memories will revive, carrying you back to your first week of golf, when you not rarely missed the globe altogether without having the ghost of an idea why. Be consoled, then, for

missing some of your early left-handed shots and persevere: you will find yourself hitting them presently, and probably surprise yourself by finding how correct the form of your left-handed finish can be, even though the ball may travel but a little distance. Why the ball should not fly farther when the swing seems correct is hard to say; it may be due to the weakness of the left arm, or to the feebler grip of the left fingers; but you will be doing uncommonly well if one shot in twenty goes anywhere near as far as your ordinary right-handed blow. The distance that you get, however, is not of real importance; the point is to utilise the strangeness of the reversed position of the body so that the mind can analyse the details of its movements and educate itself to carry on the same analysis still more effectually when you return to right-handed striking. Concentrate on this, and experiment not only with a driver but with the other clubs.

Let me repeat, don't worry yourself in the slightest over this left-handed golf: if it amuses and interests you, well and good; go on with it as long as it continues to do so. If you keep it up for a couple of weeks there is no reason why you should not make a match with another weak brother (or sister), one it may well be even weaker than yourself, and go out and play a whole round with nothing but left-handed clubs in your bag. I will venture a guess that you will be mightily pleased if at the end of the eighteen holes your score is not something a bit worse than sevens.

But the moment left-handed golf bores you, drop it like a hot potato. I am not recommending the thing to you as a penance, however much you may deserve to do penance for your golfing sins, and however able and willing you may be to scourge yourself down the back with a left-handed club in the most approved Penitente fashion. The Penitente performer, whose bleeding back surprised me so that day in New Mexico I have told of, was almost as ambidexterous as the founder of the Boy Scouts himself, so much so that he criss-crossed his lacerated skin with alternate right and left-handed strokes, laid on most impartially. But then he wasn't doing it to amuse himself; that I can swear to; whereas you, O weak brother, I hope, are getting some pleasure out of the attempt to find a cure for your sins; if you can't enjoy yourself when you are playing a game, it is about time for you to get off the planet.

So long as it amuses you, then, practise the method of inversion, and remember that the ability to play a left-handed shot may sometimes be really useful. When I was teaching rifle-shooting (another of my hobbies) I always urged my young friends to shoot from the left shoulder as well as from the right. They may find it convenient some day to aim thus round the left-hand angle of a wall without having to expose the whole body, while on horse-back it is the only way to fire off your weapon squarely to the right except by the awkward plan of holding the rifle as a pistol. So with a golf ball: some day you may discover yours

in a bunker where you can't get at it right-handed at all, but where a left-handed club, if you have one and can use it, may land you safely on the fair-way. After blundering into a bunker, a triumphant extrication like that puts you in heart again. You need not despise ambidexterity.

CHAPTER IX

THE PHILOSOPHY OF GOLF

“**T**HERE are no snakes in Iceland,” wrote the old monk when he began his celebrated chapter, and in like manner I would begin this by saying, “There is no philosophy of golf.” At any rate, if there be such a thing, the best definition of it would be that given by an unhappy Oxford undergraduate in his *vivâ voce* in Divinity when the examiners invited him to define Original Sin. “It is,” he answered, “a fond thing, vainly invented, grounded on no certain warranty of Scripture” He never finished his sentence, being promptly ploughed for irreverence by the indignant dons.

Yet I hold that a golfer is bound to be a philosopher of sorts. There was another celebrated question once put at Oxford: “Could a good man be happy on the rack?” To which the reply was “Possibly, if he was a very good man, and if it was a very bad rack.”

This question (and the answer?) may be altered on the links into “Can a good golfer be happy in a bunker?” If he can (and if the bunker be a very bad bunker!) then beyond a doubt he is a

good philosopher. What a true philosopher would say under such trying circumstances I hardly know, but there is a story of Mr. John Ball, junior, who, playing in a championship, bunkered himself, failed to get out in one ; tried again, and failed in two ; and was heard to murmur as he addressed his ball for the third time, " What a silly old ass it is ! "

If that was not true philosophy I never heard of anything half so well deserving of the name. Most assuredly if there be one thing certain about golf it is that you will sometimes find it very hard to keep your temper, more particularly in a bunker ; but you had better keep it, if you can, as did he. We all know this well enough ; the difficulty lies in the doing of it ; while as for ladling out screeds of advice on the subject to you, O weak brother, well, who am I to preach ? Indeed I have said some things in bunkers myself. Nay, even great professors, not of golf but of philosophy, can say things in a bunker that it would hardly do to print here.

There is a legend in a certain golf club I know of concerning the cause of the abrupt termination of the right of the club to use a piece of land which was private property. The property owner, a citizen of credit and renown, had a worthy dame, who happened one day to be innocently taking the air in the immediate vicinity of the golf course, when her ears were scandalised by words of wrath issuing from a neighbouring bunker. In the bunker a struggle was going on between a distinguished

elderly philosopher and a golf ball, and the winged words that issued from it were such that the lady fled in horror, with the result that the lease of the course was never renewed. I give this legend with the caution that legends are not always founded on fact. It is only fair to add that there is a totally different version of the story current (among the senior club-members) in which the whole blame is transferred from professorial shoulders to those of certain juniors; this, as Herodotus says, I know but may not relate.

It is sound philosophy for the golfer to keep himself in health by proper exercise, but he need not go into such hard training as our boxers and runners. Their violent exertions require the heart and lungs to be fit to work at concert pitch, but the links make no great demand on those organs. All the golfer needs is to have his eye clear, his muscles elastic, and his nerves right. It can do him no harm, however, and may do him good, if he does a few physical exercises at home; but how is one to select among the many much advertised systems that are in vogue? Dumbbells and Indian clubs, Swedish or Danish stretching and bending movements, gymnastics and elastic cord pullers, they are all good, that is if you can be at the bother of keeping them going. For they are contrary to Voltaire's maxim; they are dull, all of them, dull as ditch-water, beyond a doubt. On this account, if I may venture personally to recommend anything, I would like to put in a word for the punching ball. To begin with, I know no

better form of physical exercise ; and it has a special interest of its own in this way, that the ball hits back at you, which dumbbells and Indian clubs and the like never do ; if you don't dodge it as it rebounds from the ceiling you may get a clip on the nose that will surely waken you up. Moreover there is one way of using it that has some points very much in common with the full shot at golf ; the way is this : strike the ball as hard as ever you can and see how many times you can make it rebound. The actual number of rebounds will depend upon the weight and elasticity of the ball and the length of the string by which it is suspended as well as on the force of your punch, but you will soon find out what number of rebounds constitutes your private bogey, and ambition will make you want to beat it every time you punch. I compare this way of using the punching ball to the full shot at golf because in both you look calmly at the passive ball waiting there for you to strike ; calmly you waggle or measure your distance ; and then finally you let go at it with every ounce of strength you have got ; you follow through ; and afterwards you stand by to watch the effect. Say your particular bogey with the punching ball is ten rebounds ; any sort of punch will give you eight, which is no better than a fizzle ; to get nine you must hit the ball square in the middle and get your body well behind the blow ; but when it bumps the ceiling for the tenth time you know you have got in a screamer. As you have to wait for half a minute to count the rebounds the delay

involved just gives you time to collect your strength for the next shot ; you stop the ball and bring it to rest, and then go at it again. Only when you get your whole force into it and hit the ball perfectly true have you a chance of doing your bogey score of ten. And every time as you gather yourself to strike the hope springs up in you that this time you may surpass yourself, and do an eleven. For these reasons I say that ball-punching has something in common with the golfing drive and may therefore prove worth your attention.

As the parson said in his sermon, one word more and I have done. Do not let your practice be continued long enough to be a bore, but do let it be done in close connection with your reading on the subject, or in other words, combine practice and theory. So did the immortal Mr. Squeers expound his method, "c-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it."

How did such a horrible beast as Squeers get hold of the true philosophy of education ? For such precisely is what that admirable principle of his amounts to.

However, it is time to call a truce to philosophy. I have headed this chapter "the philosophy of golf," though looking back now I can't see that there is much philosophy in it, but that perhaps is no great loss, for we are apt to talk (or write) too much about the hows and whys of most things ; in time-honoured phrase it is better to cut the gab

and come to the 'osses. I remember once taking out a nephew of mine, a hopeful youth, to give him a little instruction in the art of golf, and naturally proceeded to lay down the whole law about body-swing, and finger-grip, and keeping the head still, and following through, much as I have done above. The youth listened awhile with attention, and then cut me short with "Why, uncle, all you've got to do is to look at the ball, and hit it!"

I think he hit it that time.

CHAPTER X

MERE ANECDOTAGE

“Forty years on, growing older and older,
Shorter in wind but in memory long.”

YES, in memory long ! That is what you, reader, will come to be also, if permitted like me to reach the threescore years and ten of the Psalmist. It is no sort of use to grumble over growing old, but one may pick and choose amid the lengthening scroll of one's memory and dwell by preference on the most cheerful of its contents. The generations pass, but the everlasting comedy of youth and age is repeated, and to be the elderly treasurer of a golf club where your committee consists mostly of young men under twenty-one has certain compensations.

For instance, I remember how about the end of the last century there was a certain reverend and very highly distinguished professor, not himself a golfer, whose schoolboy sons used to play over the course in the holidays. The club fees were then, I think, 5/- a week for this privilege, which of course during the long holidays comes to a tidy sum ; and the professor's wife wrote to the treasurer to know if the club would not let her boys

have the use of their course on somewhat easier terms.

His reply was to the effect that if the professor, even though he was not himself a golfer, cared to become a member of the club, he, the treasurer, would gladly try to get the club's consent to allow his two boys to play free ; and accordingly at the next meeting, after reading out the correspondence to a roomful of undergraduates forming the committee, he observed that he had drafted a rule which he thought would meet the case and begged to submit it accordingly.

This suggestion being met with favour, he proceeded to read out his proposed new rule, which began thus :

“ Rule XXI. That the privilege of using the club links be extended during the vacations to the sons of members under eighteen years of age”

That first sentence was never finished, being drowned in an electric burst of laughter from his young friends ; and as the elderly treasurer looked up, beaming at them through his spectacles, it dawned on him that there was something about the wording of his draft that was quite too much for the gravity of irresponsible undergraduates. They passed his new rule, however, all right, but it was passed in a somewhat hastily amended form.

The relations between father and son must always have a peculiar interest for an audience made up of young men, who, far from earning their own living, are dependent on a paternal allowance. Just then the club was parting with its professional :

he was a celebrated ex-champion of the great world of golf, and the club had promoted to the vacant place a very promising golfer, a young man who had been the assistant professional ; he was a local youth whose old father happened to be employed in the professional's shop as a club-repairer. Now the committee had made a practice of allowing the departing ex-champion, in addition to his wages, the half-time services of a boy who was paid entirely by the club but worked in the afternoons in the shop for the benefit of the professional. This privilege had not hitherto been extended to the newly-promoted assistant, who appealed to the treasurer about it. " Very well," said the latter, " I am quite willing you should have it, but I think your best plan will be to write me a letter saying exactly what you wish us to do, and I will bring the matter before the next meeting of the committee."

The letter was duly written, and the treasurer, after telling the committee about it in his own words, said : " Of course there is a certain complication in the matter, so perhaps I had better read you in full exactly what our young professional has to say about it himself."

Accordingly he read out the letter, which, after recounting the extra help in the shop which had previously been allowed to the departed ex-champion, went on to say : " You see, sir, that I am left with only my father to work under me in the shop, and as I cannot very well discharge him . . . "

That sentence likewise was drowned in inextinguishable laughter. The delicate point about the difficulty of 'firing out the pater' tickled irresistibly the committee of juveniles so that they fairly exploded. However, they assented most sympathetically to the newly-made pro.'s application, and he was duly allowed "half a boy's time."

Golf has so completely conquered the country now that the younger generation mostly gets hold of the elements of the game in childhood; but twenty years ago it was quite otherwise, and tall, powerful athletes, coming up from school to the 'Varsity, knew almost nothing of golf. I remember once, when I was striking off to the eleventh hole on the Cowley course, which is the nearer of the two University courses at Oxford, a couple of raw undergraduates were just playing to the fourth, which is exactly parallel to the eleventh hole but is played in the opposite direction, so that a badly pulled shot at either hole will leave the ball in the fairway of the other. I was walking to my ball after the drive, when I saw one of the men who were playing to the fourth turn considerably to his own left, march to where I expected mine to lie, and whack a ball from there into a yawning bunker. When I hurried to where my ball should most certainly have been lying, no ball whatever was to be seen, and I called after him with some severity, "I'm afraid you've played my ball, sir."

Back came the indignant denial: "No, indeed, sir. I've done nothing of the sort."

Then came 'whack' at the poor thing reposing helpless in the bunker below him, and 'whack' again, and then a third blow which fetched the victim of wrath out on to the green. Meantime, not finding mine, I hurried after the culprit, stopped him as he was preparing for yet another blow, pointed to the woefully scarred ball, and said, "If you'll look at that thing I think you'll find my initials on it." He stooped and picked it up.

"Oh, so it is! I say, sir, I'm awfully sorry! I hadn't the least idea! And I've knocked it about frightfully! Look here, sir, have another . . ." and the ingenuous youth, diving into a side pocket, produced a brand-new ball which he tried hard to get me to accept. I believe he was really contrite, and dismissed him with my blessing.

The Oxford atmosphere is sometimes accused of fostering rather alarming socialistic tendencies among its youth, and it is true that the doctrine of community of goods finds a certain acceptance with junior members of the University. I remember once walking up to the club-house on the old Hinksey links, the first day of term, just to see how things were. Not many of the young men had come up to the course so soon, but one of those that had done so was an undergraduate whose native heath was Hoylake, the second-best course in England, and who occasionally condescended to give me a liberal allowance of strokes and a beating.

"Would you care for a game, sir?" he asked, seeing me there without a partner.

"Very much," I replied, "but I've been away for the vacation and I haven't brought my clubs with me to-day."

"Oh," said he, "if you didn't mind playing with strange clubs I think I could fit you out"; and I watched him pop into one undergraduate locker after another, extracting a driver here, a brassy there, and a variety of irons elsewhere, till he had got together a goodly set. "Perhaps these might suit you, sir," he smiled, "and then we could have a round."

We had it, and I only hope that if ever the lawful owners got those clubs back they found them not very much the worse for wear. Nor is it undergraduates alone who play a part in our eternal comedy of youth and age. Caddy boys also come on to the stage; though at Oxford we do not have many of them, as the younger men mostly prefer to carry their own clubs. I knew once a professor who went out for a game with a friend, both of them being Irish and (occasionally) given to picturesque exaggeration. They struck off; and their performances were anything but brilliant, it must be confessed, at the first couple of holes; and then as they walked to the third tee the professor gaily remarked, "I shan't be able to give you anything of a match to-day, old chap, I was beastly drunk last night."

"You don't come that over me," retorted his friend. "Last night I was at a College Gaudy and I had a good skinful of champagne." And then it suddenly dawned on him that to-day as it

chanced he had taken out a caddy, a very rare thing with him. And remembering also Horace's famous line, "Maxima debetur puero reverentia," he turned sharp round to the smug-faced urchin at his heels with, "We don't really mean it, you know."

"Oh, NO, sir," came the prompt answer of the wily infant ; but the unbelieving grin with which he uttered those three words revealed the real opinion of his class as to the true moral character of senior members of the University Golf Club.

A MILLION TO ONE

Hurrah for the tee's flat stand,
Your ball on its pinch of sand,
The slow back swing,
The loose wrist fling,
And the drive which is simply grand !

Hurrah for that second clean
From a lie just fit for a queen
With the best club you've got,
When a lightning shot
Lays the ball right there on the green !

Hurrah for the long putt free,
The putt that's meant to be
Down all the way,
Let come what may ;
And that four hole done in three !

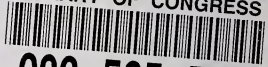
Ah would it were ever thus,
When you never need make a fuss
Bunkered heavy in sand,
Other bunkers at hand,
And nothing to do but cuss.

You count up your hopeless score :
Already you've played two more :
Your opponent grins
While you think of your sins,
But remember you've been there before !

And miracles happen in golf
Sometimes even when you are off ;
It's a million to one,
Yet the thing has been done,
Holing out with a niblick loft.

Then here's to the glorious game
That never is twice the same ;
May we all of us play
Till our final day
And then not fail of our aim.

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